



## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

### INFRASTRUCTURE

#### **Round-the-Clock Electricity Comes to Kabul:**

During the winter months, Kabul residents used to receive electricity only sporadically throughout the day, relying on wood stoves and candles for heat and light. This December, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and a consortium of donors including USAID launched a successful effort to bring round-the-clock power to Kabul.

The Government of Afghanistan negotiated the purchase of electricity from Uzbekistan while re-engineering an existing power line to transmit electricity from Uzbekistan to Kabul through Mazar-e-Sharif. Only 36 days from the inception of the project, 40 megawatts of power was flowed to Kabul. One megawatt of electricity reaches 800 households and powers 20,000 50-watt light bulbs. Now, over 216,000 residents have electricity almost 24 hours per day.



Power flows to Kabul through the North West Kabul Substation.

PHOTO: USAID/Wakil Naseri

"I can study at night without ruining my eyes," 22-year-old student Sharifa Fahim happily exclaimed. Muneer Jamili, a Kabul businessman, looks forward to enjoying a hot shower every night. "Electricity has changed our lives," he said. Now that power has reached Kabul, the project will continue to bring more, affordable electricity to the capital and other parts of Afghanistan.



Elementary school students at Sarband Gushta School received backpacks emblazoned with women's rights messages.

PHOTO: USAID/ARoLP

### DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

#### **Raising the Profile of Women's Rights in Nangarhar:**

Thanks to a new public awareness campaign, women throughout Nangarhar now have a better understanding of their rights. On January 20, USAID launched a one-month *Women's Access to Justice Campaign* province-wide, reaching out to low-income women who have little knowledge of the law or their rights and who do not know where to turn for legal assistance. It encourages women to use the court system by explaining that they have the right to use the courts and that it is not shameful to do so.



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The campaign uses a variety of media, ensuring that information reaches even those women who live in remote villages or who cannot read. The message that "Access to justice is the right of every man and woman" is repeated in both broadcast media and on posters, shopping bags, school bags, and other items that get frequent and public use. Over the course of the campaign, USAID will distribute a total of 66,000 comic books, 40,000 pamphlets, 5,000 stickers, 30,000 canvas bags, 900 posters, 15,000 pens, and 25,000 school bags bearing women's rights messages.



Women in Nangarhar read a poster about access to justice.

PHOTO: USAID/ARoLP

Principal of Bibi Zainab Girls' School Bibi Haji Afghan Gul praised the program. "By distributing the school bags to the students," she said, "you are not only educating the students, but [also] their families and everyone in the community who will see and read the message on the backpack."



Judges gather in Kabul for legal training.

PHOTO: USAID/ARoLP

**Judges Strive to Restore Rule of Law in Afghanistan's Provinces:** Years of war and Taliban rule have devastated Afghanistan's judicial system, and many judges lack the skills and legal tools to manage their courts effectively. Since 2005, USAID has made tremendous strides in restoring rule of law to Afghanistan through a series of innovative training programs for judges. By the end of the three-year initiative in January 2009, USAID had provided legal knowledge and resources to 860 sitting judges – including 43 women – from all 34 provinces.

The judges who participate in the program are dedicated to building a modern, transparent legal environment in Afghanistan, and are willing to undergo hardships to participate in the program. One judge walked for eight days from his rural province to attend the training. He commented, "I walked 14 hours a day to reach Kabul. The road is difficult, but the training is so important that it was worth the problems."

The final training program concluded on January 14, 2009. Twenty-six judges from 16 provinces spent four weeks learning about topics including constitutional law, criminal law and procedure, contracts, commercial law, family law, and fair trials. The graduating judges



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returned home equipped with new knowledge, a set of legal reference books, and a renewed passion to restore the rule of law throughout the country.



Kunar Construction Center graduates.

PHOTO: USAID/Afghanistan

**Kunar Construction Center Prepares Skilled Workers to Rebuild Afghanistan:** Developing Afghanistan's economy requires skilled workers who are equipped to construct and repair homes, offices, and stores. To address this need, the Kunar Construction Center (jointly funded by USAID and CERP) opened in March 2008 to provide formal vocational training in carpentry, masonry, electrical work, and painting. On January 18<sup>th</sup>, the center graduated its third class of 116 young tradesmen from eastern Afghanistan and provided them with tool sets appropriate for their specialties.

Local construction companies, which have difficulty finding skilled workers, visited a job fair for the graduates following the ceremony. Currently, the demand for skilled graduates exceeds the supply, and all graduates were offered full-time employment.

Speaking at the graduation ceremony, Kunar Governor Sayed Fazlullah Wahidi expressed his belief that the center's graduates would play a key role in eastern Afghanistan's economic development. "Before, we were going to Pakistan for goods like furniture. Now we have more skilled and educated workers that can build it here in Kunar," he said.



Kunar Governor Sayed Fazlullah Wahidi congratulates Construction Center graduates and notes that they will strengthen the region's economy.

PHOTO: USAID/Afghanistan

**Strengthening the Democratic Process through Voter Registration:** Afghanistan's next presidential and provincial council elections will take place in August 2009. To support fair elections and the democratic process, USAID is conducting a voter registration campaign in cooperation with the United Nations. By opening voter registration centers in Afghanistan's provinces, as well as equipping mobile registration units to reach out into rural areas, USAID will enable millions of Afghans to become first-time voters in August.





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To date, approximately 4.2 million Afghan citizens have registered to vote in the upcoming elections. Current outreach efforts focus on the insecure southern part of the country, including the provinces of Kandahar, Helmand, Uruzgan, and Nimruz. As of February 8, a total of 259,925 citizens in those provinces have been registered, including 69,289 women.

### ECONOMIC GROWTH

**Afghan Carpets at World's Biggest Carpet Fair:** Afghan carpets are known around the world for their beautiful designs and high-quality craftsmanship. Unfortunately, carpet producers often lack the resources and contacts to bring their carpets to international markets, hindering industry growth and overall economic expansion. With USAID assistance, however, this is changing.

In mid-January, 26 Afghan carpet producers displayed their handmade carpet art at the world's biggest carpet trade fair, Domotex 2009, in Hannover, Germany. Their presence built on the success of last year's show, which produced an estimated \$14M in gross revenue and awarded one Afghan carpet maker with a top prize for best modern design. This year's successful showing continued to restore the place of Afghan carpets in the international marketplace and bolstered a positive image of Afghanistan's business climate.



Afghan delegation at Domotex 2009.

PHOTO: USAID/ASMED

### Advancing Afghanistan's Legal Gemstone Trade:

Afghanistan is rich in mineral wealth, including precious stones and gems like lapis lazuli, sapphires, and rubies. However, the lack of a regulatory apparatus has stunted the country's gemstone industry, which has the potential to greatly enrich Afghanistan's eastern provinces. Today, many of Afghanistan's gems are smuggled through Pakistan and sold illegally as Pakistani exports. However, the efforts of a USAID-assisted business association are making great strides to legalize and develop the country's gemstone trade.

On January 13, the Nuristan Gemstone Association signed an agreement with the Afghanistan Ministry of Mines that – for the first time – legalized the mining and trading of gemstones in the eastern part of the country. Plans are in place to build a gemstone bazaar in Jalalabad to sell mined products, allowing Afghanistan's gemstone producers to support their families through legal means. The association, which is now self-sufficient, will continue to advance the growth of Afghanistan's gemstone industry through an advocacy campaign and improved member services.



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**Credit Unions Support Legal Crops:** Plans are in place to establish a second Islamic Investment and Finance Cooperative (IIFC) in Kandahar, providing essential access to credit for citizens. IIFCs are community-based, member-owned institutions that provide a wide range of Sharia-compliant financial services, and their presence has contributed to local employment creation and economic growth.

The first IIFC in Kandahar was established in July 2008 and now has 600 members. During the second week of January, 60 farmers joined the credit union and received \$30,000 in loans. Access to credit provides farmers with the resources to grow legal crops instead of opium poppy, contributing to security and stability in the region.



IIFC clients purchasing tractor plows for their fields in Kandahar.

PHOTO: USAID/Afghanistan

### PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM

**Resolving Community Problems through Peace Message Radio:** In Khost Province, a new radio program is helping local government respond to the needs and concerns of its citizens. Peace Message Radio broadcasts public roundtable discussions on community issues, such as access to healthcare, on a weekly basis. It provides a rare opportunity for Afghan citizens to communicate with elected officials and publicly hold the government accountable for its policies – and the government is listening.

During one recent broadcast, local leader Rasool Mohammad criticized pharmacies for selling expired drugs to community members, many of whom are illiterate, afraid to complain, or unaware that they may be sold substandard medicine. Less than three weeks later, the provincial Public Health Directorate investigated local pharmacies and seized expired and illegal medications. The message was clear – the Khost provincial government is responsive to the needs of its constituents – and Peace Message Radio has opened the lines of communication between citizens and government.



Peace Message Radio roundtable discussion with Khost citizens and officials.

PHOTO: USAID/Afghanistan

**Complaints Box Builds Government Accountability in Ghazni:** Throughout Afghanistan, regional governments are launching new programs to actively serve their constituents. In Ghazni, citizens now have a safe, easy way to provide feedback to the governor's office. The local government recently installed a complaints box, which allows residents to submit



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confidential complaints about community and governance issues. In the first two months, citizens submitted over 40 complaints, which were monitored and addressed using a tracking system.

Most of the complaints filed by Ghazni residents related to the behavior of local police officers. However, more serious complaints have been submitted – and promptly addressed by government. For example, Khair Mohammad asked the provincial governor to investigate the untimely death of his son. After Mr. Mohammad's son was hit and killed by a truck in September 2008, the truck driver was not pursued. After reading the complaint, the governor instructed the Ghazni Police Department to identify the truck driver, who was located and held accountable for his crime.



Ghazni officials collect the day's complaints box submissions.

PHOTO: USAID/Afghanistan

### EDUCATION

**e-Learning Centers Improve Studies and Job Skills:** Access to modern information technology is an essential component of a university student's education. To provide Afghanistan's young people with computer skills and tools to improve their studies and future career opportunities, USAID and Washington State University have established Afghan Next Generation e-Learning (ANGeL) Centers in three universities in Kabul.



Kabul University Chancellor Dr. Amin presents a computer training certificate.

PHOTO: USAID/AeQA

Two hundred and twenty seven students from Kabul University and Kabul Medical University recently completed information technology certificate courses held at the ANGeL Centers in their respective universities. The courses provided essential computer and communications skills and introduced the students to tailored tools that they will use in their future careers. At Kabul Medical University, students learned how to conduct MEDLINE searches to make accurate diagnoses and how to design websites on medical topics.

The students, including 47 women, received certificates of completion at an awards ceremony on

February 11, and were congratulated on their course achievements by Kabul University Chancellor Dr. Amin. In addition to those in Kabul, ANGeL centers operate in universities in





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the provinces of Balkh, Herat, Khost, and Nangarhar, providing students with internet access and computer science courses.



Cauliflower produced and sold under the brand *Pride of the Eastern Region*.

PHOTO: USAID/ADP/E

### ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT AND AGRICULTURE

#### **Strong Support and High Returns Provide Incentives to Grow Licit Crops:**

In 2007, Nangarhar Province was declared poppy-free for the first time in recent history. Farmers in Nangarhar and its neighboring provinces of Kunar, Laghman, and Nuristan now plant licit crops, such as fresh vegetables and fruits. However, they struggle to find markets for their produce and to ensure that their land will produce enough crops to both sell and feed their families.

To support farmers' efforts to grow legal crops, USAID is helping to increase the production,

value, and sales of produce. Reestablishment of Afghanistan's fruit and nut orchards, destroyed by over 30 years of conflict, is a key priority. In late January 2009 alone, USAID supplied more than 257,000 almond, apricot, pomegranate, apple, and orange saplings to 1,395 farmers. During the same two-week period, the women-owned Sammarkhil Fruits Nursery sold 30,000 pomegranate saplings, providing women with an income while increasing the country's capacity to produce a fruit valued for its demand abroad.

Branding produce while ensuring that each vegetable meets high quality standards is another way that USAID increases the value of and demand for eastern Afghanistan's crops. Under the brand *Pride of the Eastern Region*, which was launched in 2006, farmers sold over 11,000 kg of mixed winter produce in just two weeks, earning over \$20,730. These programs build the capacity of farmers to deliver high-quality fruits and vegetables to their customers and will continue to improve harvests and sales in years to come.